UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/380
19 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Item 30 of the provisional agenda*

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1	3
II.	CONSULTATIONS AND EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION	2 - 4	3
III.	FOLLOW-UP ACTION ON PROPOSALS AGREED TO AT GENERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES	5 - 33	3
	A. United Nations Office at Vienna	6 - 9	4
	B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	10 - 13	4
	C. United Nations Development Programme	14 - 15	5
	D. United Nations Environment Programme	16 - 17	5
	E. United Nations Population Fund	18	6
	F. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	19 - 22	6

* A/51/150.

96-24718 (E) 081096 111096

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
G.	World Health Organization	23 - 25	7
H.	International Monetary Fund	26	7
I.	World Bank	27 - 28	7
J.	Universal Postal Union	29 - 30	8
K.	International Telecommunication Union	31	8
L.	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	32 - 33	8

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 50/16 of 28 November 1995.

II. CONSULTATIONS AND EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION

2. On 3 January 1995, the Secretary-General of the United Nations visited the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo, where he was received by the Secretary-General of the League, Mr. Esmat Abdel-Meguid. This was the first such visit by a Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations described the purpose of his visit as being to underline the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations according to Chapter VIII of the Charter, and to discuss means of strengthening such cooperation. During the meeting, the two Secretary-Generals also reviewed a wide range of issues related to the Arab world, including Iraq, Kuwait, Libya and Western Sahara, as well as the situation in Somalia and the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea. They also had a meeting during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

3. On 15 and 16 February 1996, the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened a second high-level meeting with regional organizations with which the Organization was cooperating in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The meeting was part of the Secretary-General's ongoing effort to continue the dialogue between the United Nations and regional organizations and to agree on ways and means of enhancing cooperation. It was held within the overall framework of the "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) and its supplement (A/50/60-S/1995/1). Mr. Mowaffak Allaf, Assistant Secretary-General, Head of the International Political Affairs Department, attended the meeting on behalf of the League.

4. During the period under review, the secretariats of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, as well as the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, continued to maintain close contact on other matters of mutual concern to the two organizations. In October 1995, during the visit to New York of the Secretary-General of the League, representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) discussed with him a wide range of possible activities as a follow-up to the general meeting on cooperation which had been held at Vienna in July 1995. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States of UNDP has initiated periodic briefings for the Arab Group of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York on UNDP-related matters.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION ON PROPOSALS AGREED TO AT GENERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

5. A summary of the reports of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system on their cooperation with the League of Arab States during the

period under review is given below. It represents the follow-up action on proposals adopted at the United Nations-League of Arab States meetings in Tunis in 1983 (see A/38/299 and Corr.1), Amman in 1985 (see A/40/481/Add.1), Geneva in 1988, 1990 and 1993 (see A/43/509/Add.1, A/45/481/Add.1 and A/48/468/Add.1), and Vienna in 1995 (A/50/496).

A. United Nations Office at Vienna

6. During the period under review, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the League have continued to implement the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82).

7. The current efforts of the Office in assisting developing countries in building up indigenous capabilities in space science and technology are aimed at the establishment and operation of centres for space science and technology education at the regional level. The Office is engaged in the search for a host country for a centre in Western Asia. To this effect, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), it might dispatch an evaluation mission to the region.

8. As a follow-up to the recommendations of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the general meeting on cooperation between the United Nations system and the League (Vienna, 19-21 July 1995), the Office for Outer Space Affairs is in the process of developing a proposal for the League to co-sponsor a workshop or training courses for the benefit of its member States in one of the following subjects: space techniques for monitoring and control of the desert environment; space technology for the sustainable development of natural resources; and applications of space techniques to prevent and combat disasters.

9. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, through its Space Applications Programme, is prepared to offer the League any assistance on education and training, especially in practical applications of space technology.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

10. During the reporting period, ESCWA continued to harmonize and promote joint activities with the League of Arab States. Areas of cooperation included industry, transport, women and development, human settlements, and population. In the field of industry, ESCWA established grounds for future cooperation with the League on promoting cleaner production in the Arab world. It also participated in the workshop on "The environmental impact on the industrial activities in the Arab world" held at Cairo in December 1995.

11. In the field of transport, it was agreed with the Arab League Transport Section to coordinate, consult and identify areas of cooperation, including a proposed joint arrangement for an expert group meeting.

12. In the area of women and development, ESCWA participated in a workshop on leadership skills and coordination for Arab official delegations to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was convened under the umbrella of the League of Arab States at Beirut in July 1995. ESCWA also collaborated with the League during the Fourth Conference in organizing daily briefings and coordination meetings for the Arab official delegations to the Conference.

13. In the field of human development, the regional preparatory meeting for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was organized by ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, in Amman from 23 to 26 January 1995. ESCWA also participated in the organization of the Third Arab Preparatory Meeting for Habitat, held at Rabat in September 1995. The meeting, held in cooperation with the League, approved a draft declaration on sustainable human settlements prepared by ESCWA. The draft declaration was adopted by the Council of Arab Ministries for Housing and Reconstruction in December 1995. Jointly with the Council, ESCWA continued to publish a news bulletin on human settlements in the Arab world.

C. United Nations Development Programme

14. UNDP cooperation with the League of Arab States and its associated agencies on specific initiatives has continued. At the UNDP-League of Arab States meeting held in October 1995, the two sides addressed the need to ensure (a) systematic exchange of information and documentation between UNDP and the League of Arab States; (b) policy dialogue on planned developmental activities; and (c) collaboration in the area of mobilizing resources for development in the Arab States region. The idea of formalizing future collaboration between UNDP and the League of Arab States on the basis of a memorandum of understanding is being pursued; the draft of the memorandum is under consideration by both organizations.

15. UNDP participated in the meeting on the development of the occupied territories, which was organized by the Welfare Association and sponsored by the League, at Cairo in November 1995. The League participated in the experts meeting on poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods in the Arab region, held at Damascus in February 1996. UNDP continued its cooperation with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) in the area of environment and computerization; with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) in the area of trade; with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) in the area of oilseed crops; and with the Arab Labour Organization (ALO) in the area of labour administration, labour laws and regulations. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) cooperates with the League of Arab States and its associated agencies on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

D. United Nations Environment Programme

16. UNEP has continued to implement, together with the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations, the following five main programmes:

(a) combating desertification and increasing the green area; (b) combating industrial pollution; (c) environmental education, awareness and information; (d) conservation of biodiversity; and (e) establishment of a network of environmental information.

17. In addition, UNEP has continued to cooperate with the specialized agencies of the Arab League in the field of industrial pollution (Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization); land degradation (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development); environmental education and training (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization).

E. United Nations Population Fund

18. UNFPA and the League of Arab States have continued to cooperate fruitfully on the basis of the Population Research Unit, a permanent structure in the League (see A/50/496, para. 58), and in the implementation of the Pan-Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD).

F. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

19. Relations between UNRWA and the League of Arab States are characterized by close cooperation. UNRWA, which provides essential services to 3.2 million registered Palestine refugees in its area of operations, maintains close contact with the Permanent Observers of the League of Arab States in Vienna and New York and with the League Secretariat in Cairo, and participates in sectoral meetings organized by the League. The Agency seeks to foster regular exchanges between its officials and the League Secretariat at various levels and in various forums. One of those opportunities was the general meeting on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States held in July 1995.

20. UNRWA has benefited from the League's ongoing support for the UNRWA programme and its continuing efforts to urge Member States to increase voluntary contributions to its regular budget.

21. The fifth joint meeting between UNRWA and the Arab League Council of Education for the Children of Palestine was held at Cairo in December 1995. The annual meetings review education services offered to Palestine refugees in the host countries, and are normally attended on behalf of UNRWA by the education programme chiefs for each of the five fields of operation of the Agency. UNRWA welcomed the proposal of the League Secretariat, put forward in June 1995, to broaden the scope of the annual meeting to include all three programme areas in which the Agency is active, education, health and relief and social services.

22. Together with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNRWA co-sponsored a workshop on "The development and support of Palestinian education and the Palestinian education process", held at Cairo in June 1996.

G. World Health Organization

23. The World Health Organization/Regional Office for Health Development participated in and provided technical input for several workshops and technical documents prepared by the Technical Secretariat of the Council of the Arab Ministers of Health. These included: the seminar on alternative systems for health-care financing; meeting of the Steering Committee for Environment Pollution Control in the Arab World; meeting of the Joint Committee for Environment and Development in the Arab World; workshop on the control of pollution by heavy metals and the alternative technologies; training course on assessment of the industrial impact on the environment in the Arab countries; meeting of the Regional Population Committee; Seventh Meeting of the Arab Councils Responsible for Environmental Health Affairs; assessment of industrial impact on the environment in the Arab countries; and role of non-governmental organizations in the protection of the environment and the achievement of sustainable development in the Arab world.

24. WHO has collaborated with the technical secretariat in developing a protocol for collaboration with the Union of Arab Pharmacists and suggested rules and regulations for the functioning of the Arab Pharmacopeia Committee.

25. WHO is closely involved with other United Nations agencies and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) in the technical preparation and implementation of the PAPCHILD project. The Regional Office hosted the last meeting of the PAPCHILD Technical and Higher Steering Committee, in April 1996, and prepared, jointly with UNICEF, an evaluation paper for the project and its future development. It is also collaborating with the Arab Board for Medical Specialization.

H. International Monetary Fund

26. Although the nature of IMF activities does not necessitate intensive contacts with the League of Arab States, in the past few years a number of staff of the League have participated in courses offered by the IMF Institute. In addition, the resident representative of IMF in Egypt has participated in seminars organized by the League.

I. World Bank

27. As in previous years, the World Bank maintained through 1995 a dialogue initiated with the League in Cairo on ways to mount joint activities in the region. The dialogue has continued in 1996 at the highest levels with the recent meeting at Cairo between the President of the Bank, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

28. While no joint field activities have been established, the resident mission of the Bank in Cairo maintains contact with League representatives. The Bank staff have occasionally participated in specialized League meetings. The latest example is the third session of the League's Joint Committee on the Environment and Development, held in October 1995.

J. Universal Postal Union

29. Cooperation between the Arab countries and UPU is coordinated by the Arab Permanent Postal Commission (APPC), a specialized body of the League. In the framework of implementing its system of presence in the field, UPU has created a regional adviser post responsible for the Arab countries, with headquarters in Cairo.

30. The UPU International Bureau is regularly invited to take part in APPC meetings, and in this way contributed substantially to the work of the seminar for Seoul postage strategy national coordinators in the Arab countries held at Dubai in March 1996. At its session in October 1995, the UPU Council of Administration approved regional technical assistance priorities on behalf of the Arab countries for the period 1996-2000. Programmes and projects on behalf of these countries will be prepared and implemented in close cooperation with APPC as the League's specialized body.

K. International Telecommunication Union

31. Cooperation between ITU and the League of Arab States has continued through the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States in Cairo and the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Telecommunication Ministers of the League. ITU has worked in close collaboration and cooperated in developing telecommunications in the Arab region through various meetings, joint seminars and training courses and workshops. A cooperation agreement between ITU and the League, expected to be signed shortly, is currently being studied by both parties.

L. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

32. UNIDO has maintained close cooperation with the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies. It has established particularly close ties with the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), as well as the Arab Union for Cement and Building Materials (AUCBM), Arab Railway Union (ARU), Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GPIC), Arab Iron and Steel Union (AISU), and Arab School for Science and Technology (ASST).

33. Given the industrial mandate of both UNIDO and AIDMO, the bulk of regional activities deployed by the organizations in the Arab countries is implemented in cooperation with AIDMO as a specialized agency of the League of Arab States. In the framework of three agreements with AIDMO, joint activities have been undertaken in various industrial spheres, including the preparation of feasibility studies and investment project profiles, the organization of training workshops, assistance in the establishment of data banks, and the conduct of industrial surveys.